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# The Ecumenical Century and the Parish

ALVIN N. ROGNESS

I am not audacious enough to think that I can say anything new or solve any of the many problems which our day enforces upon us. I hope I may call into focus some of the issues that face us now and others that assuredly will be upon us in acute shape in the years ahead. At the outset I want in all candor to say that I am more terrified than exhilarated by the ministry which my son and his generation must face in the next 40 years. And it follows that I must confess that I have no easy formula for the seminary's task in training men for these uncharted, unpredictable, and ominous years.

To be original in anything is difficult. While I do not set out to pillage and plunder in order to produce this paper, since I have ears to hear with and eyes to read with and a memory of sorts, it is inevitable that you will recognize these observations as having come to your attention before. They may even be yours. One of my students wrote me from the Cameroons that he had used one of my chapel talks almost word for word. He added: "You can react in several ways. You can be honored that I thought it good enough to use. You can be unhappy that I plagiarized. Or you can write and admit that you stole it too."

There are two words that ought to set me off into a kind of soaring rhapsody but which leave me weary: *ecumenical* and *church*. I will try to analyze my ennui.

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This is the ecumenical century. The 18th and 19th centuries saw the quickening of the churches in Western Europe and America, with the resultant world missionary surge. Sponsored largely by extrachurch agencies and missionary societies, men and women by the thousands went to Asia and Africa with the Gospel. Each had his own denominational label. These people learned quite quickly that they were not primarily representatives of the Lutheran, Anglican, or Presbyterian churches but ambassadors for the one Lord of the one church. Unable to dissociate themselves from their histories, or even from Western forms of Christ's church, yet under compulsion to bridge differences in order to do the mission of Christ and His church effectively, they ushered in the pathos that swept over the churches in the last part of the 19th century and the 20th and since then has continued to press for attention. After the great missionary council in Edinburgh in 1910, the churches themselves (and not only missionary societies) have been forced to face the question of their separateness and their unity. Confronting one another, the churches have had to ask anew the question of their own character and essence. What is the church? Thousands of hours and thousands of pages have been devoted to this tantalizing search. Since the essential character of the church and the nature of its unity are both *given* by the Lord of the church and not achieved by man, the search has led back into the Scriptures with an intensity not known



50 years ago. All this has appeared to be necessary and has achieved laudable results.

Why, then, have I become tired? First, because the term "ecumenical" has been too often equated with the outward unity of the churches. Unity has taken the stage as the chief, if not the sole, fruit of the Spirit, and the corollary of unity has implicitly been thought to be merger of church bodies, and if not merger, then simple uniformity. And there are other fruits of the Spirit which each church ought to cover: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23)," not to mention holiness and truth. The soaring dimensions of the word "ecumenical" as something more than mergers or councils of church organizations must be recovered if the word is not to become flat and even distasteful.

The word "church" is threatened with the same fate. If obsession with this term leads the church to turn it upon itself to seek to define itself and to talk continuously about itself, it will be defeating itself. I would not go fishing with a man who kept talking and thinking about himself. (And at last he must grow weary of himself too.) The world outside of the church could not care less about this endless self-analysis, and we of the churches will at last be fed up too. This preoccupation with the doctrine of the church is the obvious result of the churches' need to face one another. But somewhere, sometime we must be done with the solipsism and turn to face the world as a mission to the world, ready to let any and all ecclesiastical forms die, if need be, so that the mission itself can continue on its way.

Having discharged myself of this con-

fession, I turn to a discussion that will lead inevitably back to a consideration of both these terms.

#### WE LEAVE OUR ISLANDS

I cannot avoid becoming autobiographical at this point. I do so without apology. I believe the metamorphosis which is mine is typical of the majority of people in our churches, especially the Lutheran churches of the Midwest. My grandfather immigrated in 1870 and homesteaded in eastern South Dakota. The band of immigrants which he joined had pooled their resources and had brought with them from Norway a church bell. Almost before they built their sod or log huts, they built a church. They were served by itinerant pastors. On the Sundays when there was no pastor to conduct services, my grandfather opened a book of sermons and read one of them to his family. The catechism, the hymnbook, and the "hus-postil" were the religious and cultural treasure of the immigrant.

When my father, the oldest of 9 children, was 20, a village sprang up in the settlement. There was no more land to homestead, and he chose not to go to Canada. He began a general merchandise store in the village and continued there for 46 years until his death. Two of my uncles had the bank, and another the hardware store. The community was still homogeneous and cohesive—Norwegian and Lutheran. I was confirmed in the Norwegian language. The island had not yet been invaded or abandoned. The second generation had remained at home. But at the age of 17 I had no choice. No more land, no need of another store. I went to college. The third-generation immigrant left the island.



Something had already changed the island, however. A great world war had dispatched its young men to military camps throughout our country, and a few had reached France. Horatio Alger had caught the fancy of teen-agers. In a subtle way we—who had been taught original sin and had been warned about the inevitable Armageddon—were conditioned to the optimism that surged through the Western World in the opening years of this century. The sturdy economic virtues of industry, thrift, and honesty would usher in Utopia. History possessed a built-in *élan* that assured man's progress toward the good life. Civilization, like the amoeba, was struggling upward and upward, from its brutish beginnings to the good life, when wars and disease would no longer ravish mankind. Years later I read Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion*, published in 1910, where the author at least intimated that man was now too intelligent to fight wars, since even then the world was too interlocked to have any nation emerge as victor. 1914 was a blow, to be sure, but when we entered the war in 1917 we braced ourselves with two great slogans, "One war to end all war" and "The war to save the world for democracy." Nov. 11, 1918, the war was over, and we settled back to a job well done. We had saved the world for democracy. The Kaiser defeated, the world could go on to inherit perpetual peace.

This comfortable world continued through the expanding economy of the twenties. Then came the great depression and the years of drought. The early thirties had Mussolini, Stalin, and Hitler as grim reminders that the world had not been saved for democracy. Moreover, war clouds were gathering, and by the end of

the decade we were in the second great war. When that war ended in 1945 on the grim punctuation marks of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, no one talked about having fought two wars to end all wars. The strident mood of progress which had dominated the first half of the century had given way to the uneasy mood of crisis. We have become acutely aware that we can now lose overnight the achievement of centuries. We talk of megaton bombs which pack in one blow the cumulative explosive power of all the wars that have gone before.

We have learned to know science as a phenomenon with two faces, the face of an angel and the face of a monster. The triumphs of medicine present us with the prospect of population explosion of unmanageable dimensions. The achievements in electronics and computer technology may dictate that by the end of this century only 5 percent of the working force will be employed in jobs which currently provide work for the overwhelming majority of the labor market. Meanwhile the machine keeps moving people from the farms into mammoth, swarming urban centers. The islands we had known during the first century of the immigrant are gone, never to return. We face a world of seething mobility. We face a world terrifyingly urban. We face a world able to destroy itself in hours.

Moreover, we face a world of shattered ideologies and crumbling faiths. The three-story universe which suffered its mortal blow centuries ago has in fact lived on for us until this generation. Now it is gone, except in the language of the poet. We measure time and space in terms of billions of light-years, and our knowledge of gal-



axies and quasars has made the verse "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are . . ." seem naive even in kindergarten. The comfortable world of the Enlightenment, with reason as the key to truth and the gentle umpire of life, has had to go. The optimism of the social liberal who at the opening of the century had taken his cue from Darwin's biological architecture and who believed that man himself, in his moral and spiritual life, was on an unresisting spiral upward from the beast to the angel—this optimism has had to go. And Nietzsche's grim good news "God is dead" has blossomed into an age where in less than half a century over a billion people have been trapped behind iron and bamboo curtains where the open and explicit premise for life is a brave, new world without God. Even in the noncommunist world of the West, for the first time in centuries, there are open and respectable alternatives to God as the central orientation for life.

To this world of volcanic change and rival faiths the church must minister. Its only chance to escape the societal typhoons and the maelstroms would be to create Trappist monasteries where radio, television, and telephone would be barred and where the few would huddle in silence to sing the ancient liturgies and hear only the readings from the church fathers. But this we cannot do. We are the church, the body of Christ. We cannot turn in upon ourselves and have our cozy rendezvous with God. We must face the world, for, as the late Archbishop Temple reminded us, we are the one people or institution, if you will, in the world whose chief concern is with people outside itself.

As the church, and especially as theologi-

cal seminaries of the church, we cannot escape two initial responsibilities. First, we must listen to the world, or, in modern sophisticated terms, we must be in dialog with the world. While we have the supreme commission to come as ambassadors, bringing the Word of Another, we come in love of the world, as our Lord came in love. And this must mean that we take the world with utter seriousness. We give it the dignity of letting it be heard, not condescendingly nor patronizingly, but to learn from the world where its pathos and anguish lie. We do not gallop down from Mount Olympus or Sinai or Zion on our white steeds with an encyclopedia of answers. We come first as He came, almost as ambassadors incognito, to hear the cries of the world, to suffer in its sufferings, and to bleed with its wounds. The second responsibility flows from the first. We must speak the language of the world. As theologians, the "scientists" in religion, we have our own esoteric language. As shepherds of the flock we speak the language of the family of God. But beyond the theologian and beyond the family is the world. If we fail to listen, we shall never be able to speak. My confirmation pastor needed only to translate the language of the theologian into the language of the family. Everyone on the island lived in the world of the Catechism. For today's pastor the most poignant task he has is to communicate to a generation whose catechism has been inundated by the flood of television, paperbacks, textbooks, and endless chatter in shops and offices. My farmer grandfather had nothing but the snorting of horses all week long to compete with the Sunday sermon. The language of the Bible was his world.



## WHAT WE HEAR WHEN WE LISTEN

Lutherans returning from the 1963 Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Helsinki felt chagrined that this great gathering failed to issue a statement on justification which might express this central truth of the faith in ways which would command the attention of our contemporaries. The assembly's message to the churches perhaps gave a clue to the apparent failure. The question itself is not relevant! By this we do not say that the doctrine is not as important as ever. But the question of justification is not related to the cry of the age. The question 400 years ago was: "How do you do business with God?" The question today is: "Is there a God to do business with?" Today's world does not ask, "Do we find favor with God through an inventory of our good works or through faith in the merits of Jesus Christ?" It asks, "Is there a God at all?" There is little point in telling a man to surrender to the mercy of God if he has not yet begun to struggle with God. You fight before you surrender. Modern man's plight is expressed in the cynical bravado of this melancholy paraphrase of our great hymn:

Our only fortress now is man,  
A bulwark often failing.  
But yet we do the best we can,  
So what's the use of wailing.  
Let God and freedom go,  
Immortal life also,  
The Gospel now is nil,  
But man abideth still.  
Let's praise ourselves forever.

John Steinbeck has said it in less defiant language, on the occasion of his acceptance in December 1962 of the Nobel prize for literature. He said:

We have usurped many of the powers we once ascribed to God. Fearful and unprepared, we have assumed lordship over the life and death of the whole world and all living things. The danger and the glory and the choice rest finally in man. The test of his perfectibility is at hand. Having taken God-like power, we must see for ourselves the responsibility and the wisdom we once prayed some deity might have. Man himself has become our greatest hazard and our only hope. So that today, St. John, the Apostle, may well be paraphrased: "In the end is the word, and the word is man—and the word is with men." (*New York Herald Tribune*, Overseas Edition, December 11, 1962, pp. 1, 2)

In Arthur Miller's play, *After the Fall*, Quintus, a middle-aged lawyer whose life is falling apart, expresses the world's situation and his own in these striking words:

You know . . . more and more I think that for many years I looked at life like a case at law—a series of proofs. When you're young you prove how brave you are, or smart; then, what a good lover; then, a good father; finally, how wise, or powerful. . . . But underlying it all, I see now, there was a presumption. That I was moving on an upward path toward some elevation where—God knows what—I would be justified, or even condemned, . . . a verdict anyway. I think now that my disaster really began when I looked up one day—and the bench was empty. No judge in sight. And all that remained was the endless argument with oneself—this pointless litigation of existence before an empty bench,—which of course is another way of saying despair. [Quoted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc.]

Man's loneliness and estrangement, his meaninglessness and despair—these are the inevitable result of not having a God



from whom and in whom he can find his dignity and worth. His essential humanity is at stake. If he is not a creature or a child of God, he is at best the highest of animal life. Even though the highest, he remains an animal. He may write oratorios and discover the secret of the atom, but his family is the amoeba, the cockroach, and the elephant. If he surrenders the other branch of his family, the angels and the archangels, and all the company of heaven, he is doomed to melancholy. Losing God, he is driven in upon himself, and his only chance at heroism or even humanity is to embrace nothingness and despair with some semblance of gallantry. This is Quintus' way out. It is as if a man is caught in the rapids, swept down toward the waterfall in his frail canoe. He hears the thunder of the cataract and knows no escape. But he resolves not to be swept over. In the last moment, as the canoe is poised for the plunge, in defiance of the rapids, he leaps to his death. In the leap there is yet a fragment of the heroic, the human.

This is the world we face, and this is the voice of the age which we hear. And we would be less than honest were we not to admit that this world is very much with us too. It seeps into the marrow of our souls. Its doubts and its fears are our doubts and fears too. On the island of my childhood and youth I never had any doubts about the existence of God. At successive stages I struggled with questions such as the authority of the Scriptures and the nature of miracles. Today, when the tempter attacks me, he no longer bothers with small arms; he levels the big guns at me: What if there is no God? What if Jesus is not the Incarnate One? What if I am left alone and marooned on this

planet, only another cog in a vast machine of an incredible microcosm and macrocosm? And I know, as I never knew in my youth, that of my own reason or strength I cannot believe in my Lord or come to Him. I do not stand on some high vantage point, above and beyond the world's storm centers, serene and tranquil, untouched and untroubled by the *Angst* that cripples my brothers. The storms that rage surge through me too. But I know, too, praise God, that there is a Rock and that by grace I have been rooted to that Rock.

#### THE WORD THAT WE BRING

To this world we come with the Word of God. Robert Ingersoll, at the graveside of his brother, said, "... Life is but a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. . . ." We believe we have more than an echo. We believe that "in many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son, whom He appointed the Heir of all things, through whom also He created the world" (Heb. 1:1, 2). We do more than join our brothers in the plunge over the cataract. We come with the Gospel of salvation.

I make two pleas, and the two are really joined as one. First, I plead that we explore deeply, guard carefully, and minister courageously the message of the Gospel, the ministry of Word and Sacraments. Secondly, I plead that we seek out as allies and brothers all those who truly confess Jesus Christ as Lord and join forces with them in the gigantic mission that faces the church in our world. To default in either of these is to betray the Lord and the



mission He thrusts upon us. To pursue both will be to recover the rhapsodic quality of both words — "ecumenical" and "church."

I would be derelict in my love for my brother in the world and for my brother in other Christian churches were I to come to them with anything short of the fullness of the Gospel which has been revealed in Christ and which has been conveyed and entrusted to me in and through my own church, the Lutheran Church. I need not be priggish and exclusive and contend that my church is the best of all churches. But I must bring the best my church has to give. And if I am to do this, I must know what God has entrusted to my church. A Lutheran theological seminary ought not apologize for exploring deeply the Christian faith as expressed in the confessions or symbols that are woven into its own history. The one, holy, christian and apostolic church on earth takes the shape of an archipelago, a collection of islands. To know the one church, a person must at least become thoroughly familiar with his own theological and ecclesiastical island. We have become skittish about "indoctrination" as a sound pedagogical principle. But if "indoctrination" means to be steeped in the knowledge of one's own church and its theological orientation, then it becomes not only a laudable term but a necessary step to understanding and evaluating the whole of the archipelago.

There are rich gifts which the Lord of the church has in His mercy given to the Lutheran Church. Born as it was — in an institutional sense — out of the anguish of a soul in search of peace with God, it has gravitated toward certain pivotal emphases or confessions which are derived from

Scripture and which are intrinsic to the universal or one church.

The gift we bring to our age is the grand plan, the epic which opens with the strident words of Genesis 1, "In the beginning God . . ." and ends in Revelation 22 with the cry of the church "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." In an age when life is fragmented and meaningless, we come with a great picture into which all the pieces, as in a jigsaw puzzle, can find their place. For want of the grand plan, a divine metaphysics, a full theology, mankind will be lost. Good will and sincerity are not enough. It is the Word of God that enlightens and saves.

A child dies. The mother asks, "Why did my child die?" Medical science can give an answer — a description and history of the disease. But this is not the answer that the mother wants or needs. She cries out for some grand plan. You, her pastor, give it to her. You tell her how God created her child in His image to live with Him forever and how He claimed this child in Holy Baptism. You tell her how in the Fall, through man's disobedience, sin and tragedy and death came into the world through the back door, against the will of God. You tell her how God could not let us go, and how He set in motion a plan of recovery, of reconciliation, which finally cost Him the life of His own Son — and that in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son her child has been caught up in a triumph which includes the annihilation of death itself. Her child, though a victim of the apparently capricious attack of death, is now forever through with death and has been swept into the glorious presence of the Lord forevermore. And the mother's heart finds



comfort. The jagged, tormenting piece is fitted into a great and good whole. To the task of giving our age the grand plan the most arduous and painstaking efforts of our theology must be dedicated. It is not an intellectual or speculative exercise in a vacuum. It is the Word of God in a loving and anguished encounter with the pathos of fallen men in a fallen world. It is a task and a mission which deserve the very best that dedicated minds and hearts can give.

I have had many occasions through the years to discover and appreciate the riches of the theology of our church. A professor in the philosophy of religion (who was not a Lutheran) told us that of all the Christian churches the Lutheran Church had the profoundest grasp of the fall of man in its doctrine of original sin. And he went on to say that because it had grasped the depth of man's sinfulness, by the same token it had also emerged with the most exalted comprehension of the grace of God. In 20 years in the parish ministry I have seen the peace that comes when the wonder of justification by grace through faith alone breaks in upon a person. I have seen the quiet revolution that follows upon the forgiveness of sins and the strange joy of living as a forgiven one. I have appreciated the church's childlike faith in the Scriptures as the Word of God and a sure guide in all matters of faith and life. I have watched the judgment of God in the Law shatter the pretensions of man in order that the Gospel could introduce him to a radical newness of life. I know that if the church is to come to the world as its servant it must come not only in love, but it must come speaking the truth in love. For it is by the Gospel, the truth

of God, that a blinded world can have light and a dying world can have life. We must not do less than explore the Gospel deeply, guard it carefully, and proclaim it boldly.

#### WE SEEK OUR BROTHERS

The Lutheran Church has often been charged with not knowing how to live and work with fellow Christians of other churches. The charge may not be without its basis in fact. Most of our immigrant fathers came from provinces or nations in northern Europe which were predominantly Lutheran. Isolated by language for three generations in this country, they lived on their islands with little need to relate to other Christians. For the major part of the first century, the church reached out to immigrants or children of immigrants — German Lutherans to German Lutherans, Norwegian Lutherans to Norwegian Lutherans. I was 17 years old before I had seen a Methodist. For at least a quarter of a century now this isolation has been crumbling fast. At least we are learning rapidly to live with one another as Lutherans. Most of us would not know just how to describe the unique theological characteristics of an American Lutheran Church over against a Missouri Lutheran or Lutheran Church in America Lutheran — whether you deal with theologians or laymen. We will be hard pressed in the next half century to define a Lutheran Christian over against a Methodist Christian or an Episcopalian Christian. And we may well discover that in the face of a creeping secularism we will do well to articulate clearly what is peculiarly Christian, and that to this great need each of the churches must be in open traffic with other Christian churches in order that the



fullness of the Gospel may be kept for all the churches.

I wonder if it cannot be said that our inhibitions so far as other Christians are concerned have stemmed from factors which are more sociological, linguistic, and cultural in nature than theological. It is true that the magnificent statement in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession is limiting, but is it not also emancipating? Neither less nor more is required for fellowship than agreement concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Is there any other church in Christendom that has as simple, as firm, and as comprehensive a formula for the task of facing sister Christian churches? We are bound in the Gospel, but we are free in the Gospel. In the captivity and the freedom which the Gospel enforces upon us, may it not be that as the Lutheran church we are better equipped for the ecumenical task than any other Christian church in the world?

This ecumenical century has taught us one thing: the churches, especially the so-called confessional churches, will never attain unity by a process of subtracting, chopping off here and there until some easy common denominator can be reached. On the contrary, the churches have explored more deeply than before the treasures of their own historical confessions and traditions and have examined them against the authority of the Holy Scriptures with renewed intensity. And in doing this in association with one another, they have had the joy of discovering their common loyalty to the Scriptures and that some of the differences they thought were divisive disappeared in a removal of misunderstandings.

Christian faith, of course, is fellowship: fellowship with Christ, the Head, and fellowship with all believers, who are the members of His body, the Church. . . . Christian faith also is the seeking of fellowship, that is, the discovery and the practice of this spiritual fellowship with other Christians. It laments isolation; it yearns for communion. Christian faith seeks fellowship in prayer, in corporate worship, in Communion, in doing the Lord's work, and even in suffering for the faith. ("United Testimony on Faith and Life—American Lutheran Church," *Lutheran Outlook*, v. 17 [March 1952], p. 78)

Fellowship is not an option for us. To find ways and means of actualizing it becomes a central duty for the churches.

At a meeting of the International Missionary Council in Willingen, Germany, in 1952, representatives of the Pentecostal churches of the world issued this statement:

Within Pentecostal ranks there are some honest misgivings concerning some aspects of the ecumenical movement for church union, but there is also a hearty recognition of a significant moving of the Holy Spirit in recent years to draw all true Christians closer together. . . . If the Pentecostal Churches now come to give to their sister churches in Christ, they come also to receive. . . . They come for fellowship, for the reciprocity of love, for striving together for the faith of the Gospel. In these threatening days Christian ranks must be closed up. . . . (Quoted from Bernard M. Christensen, *He Who Has No Sword* [Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Co., n. d.], p. 139)

I have spoken of the churches as theological and ecclesiastical islands in an archipelago. It is not likely, nor would it



be desirable, that they will be merged together into one unambiguous mass. But there will be bridges all over the place, and much traffic from one island to another. And in the traffic itself we will hopefully understand better and enjoy more fully that which we confess as the one, holy, Christian and apostolic church.

We who work and study at theological seminaries must be sensitive to the needs of our pastors and missionaries, who are to live and work in this age of bridges. I can think of at least six situations where the wise and effective ministry of the Gospel will demand much traffic: 1. The inner city, where guerrilla warfare will not do, each denomination struggling against titanic odds. Here we must learn from each other and join hands with each other. 2. Rural America, with its diminishing population and disappearing villages. If the communities are to have shepherds of the flock and not be left to itinerant and sporadic pastoral care, denominations that confess Jesus as Lord will be forced to find ways to cross over bridges. For the Lutheran churches of the Midwest, with their traditional rural strength, this may already be an urgent need. 3. State or area welfare agencies. Consolidation of programs may be the only effective way that the churches can deal with the rising demands of the needy on the one hand and deal effectively with the state and community agencies on the other hand. 4. University ministry. Already our ministry to university students demands much collaboration among pastors and workers, and their need will mount rapidly. 5. World Missions. I need hardly point out that this front needs a tightening of the various sectors of the denominational forces and

indeed often a merging of them. 6. The area of church-state relations, which may press upon us in America with an urgency which will require the united thought and action of all Christians.

In my 20 years as a parish pastor I served in communities that were heavily Lutheran. I do not know how to live in a Lutheran diaspora. I have always had the luxury of running my own show. I could confine my relations to other Christians to community service clubs and to the PTAs. This day is gone for my son. If he is to be faithful to his Lord and to his Lord's church in the ministry of the Gospel, he cannot avoid the bridges. I have no wisdom for him except to urge that he be faithful to two equally towering mandates: to steward the truth of the Gospel and to love his brethren in Christ. He will encounter situations that are difficult. In the Lutheran church there is no pope, no authoritarian council, to whom he can pass the buck. He can draw on the insights of the fathers, he can be sensitive to the consensus of his fellow Lutherans; but guided by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures he will have to hold his commission as an undershepherd under the direct and often lonely direction of the Great Shepherd. And as he traffics across the bridges, I wish for him three things: that he becomes more deeply appreciative of his own theological heritage than before, that he is driven back into the Scriptures as never before, and that in knowing others in the family of our Lord he may confess the one, holy, Christian and apostolic church with a rapture and in a dimension that our generation has only seen from afar.

St. Paul, Minn.